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SUBJECT: MOHR ON SAUDI DETAINEES, TORTURE, NATIONAL HR
STRATEGY

REF: BAGHDAD 2113

Classified By: Deputy PolCouns Ellen Germain for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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11. (S) SUMMARY: Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim told PolOff on July 17 about her July 14 meetings in Amman with Saudi officials on Saudi detainees in GOI and MNF-I custody. The Saudi officials from the Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a list of Saudi detainees, the right to visit the detainees, the ability to have some detainees finish their sentence in Saudi Arabia, the ability to release detainees straight to Saudi custody, and a list of Saudis sentenced to the death penalty. Minister Wijdan commented on the apparent rise of torture in GOI detention facilities, especially at the Minister of Interior's Kadhimiya detention facility. She also shared the ministry's recent report on preparing a National Human Rights Strategy. Wijdan said the ministry will bring together all relevant parties in a conference to formulate a national strategy based on the initial report. END SUMMARY.

12. (S) Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim told PolOff on July 17 about her meetings with Saudi officials about Saudi detainees in GOI and MNF-I custody. Saudi Human Rights Commission Vice President Zaid Al-Hussain, 16 other officials from the commission, and two officials from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs met with Minister Wijdan on July 14 in Amman. The Saudi officials made five requests about Saudi detainees in both GOI and MNF-I custody: 1) a list of all Saudi detainees; 2) the right for Saudi officials and families to visit detainees; 3) the ability to allow some detainees to complete their sentence in Saudi Arabia; 4) the ability for released detainees to be transferred directly to Saudi Arabia; and 5) a list of Saudis sentenced to the death penalty by an Iraqi judge. Saudi media reports that Wijdan will provide a list of Saudis in Iraqi custody to the commission, and Wijdan said that she would raise with MNF-I the issues about Saudi detainees in MNF-I custody. Wijdan commented that the meeting went surprisingly well, and both sides are planning to visit the other's country for future talks. Wijdan said she would invite a delegation from the Saudi Human Rights Commission to Iraq and possibly hold a regional human rights conference.

13. (C) Wijdan said that, according to her ministry's reports, incidents of torture have risen recently in GOI detention facilities, especially at the Ministry of Interior's (MoI) Kadhimiya Second National Police Detention Facility. She described a recent case of torture of the previous warden of Kadhimiya Women's Prison, Zadon Jafar Siki, who was arrested by the MoI on June 26 and is now in the Second National Police Detention Facility (reftel). The deputy warden of the women's prison met with Wijdan on July 16 and said Zadon had been tortured, had his legs and arms broken, and is now deaf. Wijdan referred the case to the MoI Inspector General Aqeel, who said that he would investigate the case.

14. (C) Minister Wijdan also shared with PolOff her

ministry's recent report on preparing a National Human Rights Strategy, entitled "The Basic Principles of Preparing the National Plan." The 62-page report addresses reasons for a national strategy, how to develop the strategy, who should be involved in formulating the strategy, and how the plan will be implemented and monitored. Wijdan said the ministry will soon bring together all relevant parties involved in human rights in a conference to formulate a national strategy based on this initial report. She said the PM had already sent a letter to each ministry requesting that they help formulate this national strategy. The Australian Ambassador to Baghdad told Wijdan that the Australian Government will train top levels of Iraqi human rights officials on how to implement and monitor the plan once it has been finalized.

15. (S) COMMENT: We are strongly encouraging increased engagement by Saudi Arabia with Iraq, so Wijdan's eagerness to continue cooperation with Saudi officials on detainee issues and broader human rights issues is a positive step. A future conference or meeting in Iraq could help establish greater ties between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Post will follow-up on the reports of torture at the MoI detention facility, and will bring Wijdan on an inspection in upcoming weeks. The initial report for developing a human rights strategy seems to be comprehensive and was completed without outside support; it is an encouraging sign from the increasingly effective ministry.

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